New Life Session 5

Empowered – Part Two

Review of Session 4

- Did anyone give time to talking to Holy Spirit, inviting him to be a search engine for the Father's heart? What came to you in those moments?
- Have you found yourselves relying more on our Holy Spirit's journey of transformation, finding freedom from guilt, shame, fears and anxieties?
- How is the fruit of the Spirit growing in you? Have you been noticing anything that is naturally changing within your character and responses to life around you?

Session 5 Aims

- To journey through the New Testament and its teaching around Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts.
- To understand what it means to be filled and baptised in the Holy Spirit.
- To look at all the gifts of the Spirit and give time to receiving these - being empowered by Him.
- To encourage using and asking for these gifts, enabling us to begin to **transform the world (around us).**

Introduction

Last session, we considered the fact that when we accepted Jesus into our lives (our salvation), we invited Father, Son and Holy Spirit to live deep within our spiritual being. We became more aware of the Spirit and how he helps to relate to Father.

BUT there is another level we can go to in our relationship with Holy Spirit. It is a place of empowerment and gifting, it's biblical and in the New Testament - the disciples considered it ***'a must have'*** for any new disciple of Jesus. **It's called the Baptism of the Spirit.**

The disciples made sure that every believer was given an opportunity to have this. This isn't just a one-off moment for us though. Holy Spirit longs to continue to fill us, over and over again and we can ask him for this regularly - to be overflowing with his presence. In fact, Paul encourages us to do this and not to leave it out of our lives. **The normal life of a believer is a regular, ongoing Holy Spirit-filled Life.**

When Jesus was nearing his death on the cross, he began to talk to his disciples about Him leaving them and their need of another helper who would empower them to continue their incredible journey of life with Jesus. (John 16).

They truly had begun to change the world around them, taking the good news of Jesus wherever they went. Demons fled, miracles were the norm and people were saved, joining the disciples and taking their number to around 72. Biblically it was probably just men that were counted in that number, but we know that women and families were in this group and some women were very significant, giving rich funding and service to spread the good news of Jesus.

But Jesus would no longer be with them. They would eventually lose their constant connection to Father and Holy Spirit through Jesus. What would they do, how would they continue this incredible life that they now knew and loved?

Jesus breathed…

Before Jesus went back to Heaven, he appeared to his disciples when they were locked in a secret location, fearing arrest by the Jewish leaders. Jesus' body had disappeared from the tomb and there were lies and rumours being spread about what had happened, it seems that the disciples were afraid that they would be questioned about this.

Remember in the Bible Project video, how we heard Holy Spirit is also called **'Ruach'** which means **'wind or breath of God'**, which is a descriptive name for Him. As Jesus met with his disciples in that place, he did something incredible and said…

"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."
John 20: 21-22

Very soon Jesus would no longer be with them but their personal journey with Holy Spirit had begun.

PART ONE – EMPOWERED to transform the world around us

Just before Jesus left to return to heaven, he said the following…

"…you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere - in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
Acts 1: 8

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
Matt 28: 18-19

These verses are generally known as **'The Great Commission'**. The disciples had a massive task ahead of them, but they were obedient to Jesus. They had to wait to be empowered before they even began to step out into these things,

'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised…John baptised with water but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

We can already see a change in their behaviour and attitude. They still took themselves away but now they weren't hiding away in fear. They took ownership of Jesus' commandment and were preparing themselves for what lay ahead. They were actually quite a busy group - praying together regularly and reorganising themselves, finding a replacement for Judas. There were about 120 of them and Peter was already stepping up into leadership. You can read all about this in Acts 1.

GodFirst uses a phrase that helps us to think about this commission of Jesus in a very simple way and in a way that makes it very personal for us.

'Transformed People that Transform the World (around us)'

Just like the disciples, we need to be empowered, equipped and filled with the Spirit to help us to do this. It's not something we can do on our own. But Jesus' call is still the same to us - to take the good news of the Gospel to those around us, to make disciples of those that turn to Jesus and to influence and bring the culture of heaven into any situation we find ourselves in.

Some of you may actually have a big vision and actually want to go on a mission to other countries and people groups - could be exciting!! But probably for most, it might help to add two words, 'around us', making it a much more local experience. Workplaces, friends, families, homes, a passing conversation with a neighbour or even a stranger, reaching out to the needy. This is your world around you. How can Holy Spirit help you with this?

💬 **Jesus asked his disciples to continue with the life they had known with him for around 3 years. We've already thought about what it could look like to live a 'transformed life' and how the wonderful Holy Spirit willingly helps us with this, but when we think about 'transforming the world' - how does that make us feel? What could it look like if we tried to do any of this in our own strength? How can Holy Spirit help us with this?**

What could the Baptism of the Holy Spirit look like for us?

When we first start to think about something like this, the best place to start is in God's Word. If something we experience doesn't line up with what the Bible tells us then we can safely reject it and not engage with it. Thankfully, the New Testament accounts of how Holy Spirit affected the early church and the apostles are so varied and at times very unspecific. This means that our wonderful Holy Spirit has freedom to move just as he wants to.

At GodFirst, we are passionate and hungry for the things of the Spirit of God. We love the model of the New Testament and follow Paul's instructions in Corinthians as to what this can look like when we gather corporately. We love to pray for one another to be empowered (filled, baptised) with the Spirit as often as possible. We recognise that as vessels or 'Temples' of the Holy Spirit we can become a bit fragile and broken at times and if we are really authentic, we are not always full of the Spirit - we leak! **Just like the disciples, we need to be constantly aware of being equipped and empowered for all that God calls us to.**

What does the New Testament say about being filled or baptised by Holy Spirit? We will start with the first powerful encounter recorded in Acts 2.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2: 1-4

Read...Acts 2: 14-21

Just after this had happened, Peter spoke in a loud voice to the people gathered who were wondering what on earth was going on. This was Peter, who just a few weeks previous to this had denied Jesus, was full of despair and was afraid to continue to be a follower of Jesus. Jesus had reinstated him in one of his post resurrection encounters, but this was the first time Peter had stepped out like this. Peter and John then went on to perform their first miracle without Jesus by their side and commanded a lame man to walk, outside the gates of the Temple in full view of anyone around. Including those who disapproved.

There are many stories of what powerful encounters with Holy Spirit looked like, when he came upon new believers in the New Testament. Here are some examples of them. You can look up the stories in your own time.

- Tongues of fire, gifts of languages, looking physically drunk, boldness, miracles, exponential church growth, gospel spreading. Acts 2 & 3

- Mystery. People were saved and baptised and filled with the Spirit but Simon the Sorcerer saw something so significant that he wanted to buy that power from the disciples. Acts 8

- Saul and Annanias. Saul's commissioning and baptism, filled with the Spirit. Supernatural restoration of sight. Acts 9

- Spirit fell without laying on of hands. First time speaking in tongues is mentioned. Exaltation (Jubilant and exorbitant) praise. Acts 10

- Roman Jailor. Saved and baptised. Filled with Joy - not the usual state of a Roman Jailor! Acts 16

- Laying on of hands after Baptism, speaking in tongues and prophecy. Acts 19

We can sum these up like this ....

- Empowerment and boldness
- Miraculous signs and wonders
- Healing
- Unexplained and uninhibited behaviour
- Gift of tongues/miraculous languages
- Prophecy
- Exuberant praise & adulation
- Joy
- Mystery (anything can happen)

This is some of what we may experience with our own ***'Baptism of Holy Spirit'.***

When Jesus spoke about his disciples being 'baptised' in the Holy Spirit, he used the same word that John used to describe how Jesus would 'baptise' with the Holy Spirit and Fire. It is also the same word used to describe any water baptisms in the bible. In Greek it is pronounced 'baptizo' and this means **'full immersion'.**

"I baptise you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

John the Baptist

"John baptised with water, but in just a few days
you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

Jesus

REFLECTION

Think about a full water immersion baptism…what the person being baptised looks like, particularly after their baptism - wet head to toe etc.

We could sum it up like this…

'Something significant happened. We knew that it had happened. There were signs that it had happened. We were different after, to what we were before - physically and spiritually - seen and unseen.'

This should be our expectation when thinking about what baptism in the Holy Spirit could be like.

Two well-known church leaders were even bold enough to put it like this…

"In the New Testament, people were not vaguely aware of the Spirit. **Either they had received Him or they had not.** When the spirit came upon them, they knew all about it and so did everyone else present. Simon the Sorcerer saw something that so fascinated him that he wanted to buy the ability to give the Spirit!"

Terry Virgo

If you do not ***know*** you have been baptised in the Holy Spirit, then ***you haven't been*** baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Guy Miller

At GodFirst, we usually follow the disciples model of salvation, baptism and laying on of hands to receive Holy Spirit. We then allow as many opportunities as possible throughout church life, for us to continue to be filled with the Spirit, moving in the gifts of the Spirit and living those empowered, bold lives that can make such a difference to a fallen and broken world.

PART TWO – EMPOWERED with the gifts

What are the gifts of the Spirit?

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but the gifts of The Spirit are evident in the Old and New Testaments…

Words of Wisdom
Words of Knowledge
Faith
Leadership
Mercy
Generosity

Healing	Teaching
Miracles	Encouraging
Prophecy	Comfort the Mourning
Discernment of Spirits	Bring Favour
Tongues	Right wrongs (evil)
Interpretation of Tongues	Visions
Dreams & their Interpretation	Celibacy & Marriage
Freedom	Hospitality
Gospel Anointing (evangelism)	Intercession
Emotional Healing	Craftsmanship
Serving (Helping/Administration)	Composing of Music (Poetry & writing)

We need to know what we can ask for, what we can eagerly desire and what we can expect. (Paul's teaching to follow)

Take a look at the list - are there that you are unfamiliar with? Are there any that you think you would love to know more about, receive, move in and experience them yourself?

There are lots of instructions throughout the Bible about the gifts of the Spirit. But the ones we will consider for now, can be found in **1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13 and 14. Please take some time to read through these chapters. They are an incredible journey through the gifts and are so helpful and informative.**

Chapter 13 is probably one the most well-known chapters in the bible and is often read and quoted in weddings. It is about the most important fruit of the Spirit, **LOVE.**
In this chapter Paul says - to paraphrase….

'I can have any of the greater gifts but if I use them without love, I'm just making a load of noise which nobody wants to hear,
or should take any notice of.'

He ends with the three fruits of the Spirit - Faith, Hope and Love and says the greatest of these is…**LOVE**

I call these three chapters **'The Love Sandwich'.** In the middle of all of Paul's instructions about spiritual gifts to the Corinthian church, there is a whole chapter on LOVE. As we move in any spiritual gift that Holy Spirit chooses to give us, we root those gifts in our love of Father God and our love of the person in front of us. This turns hearts towards God and starts to transform the world around us.

Paul's four principles about the Gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13 & 14.

1. Paul tells us twice in these chapters to **'eagerly desire'** the greater gifts, especially prophecy. Which means that we have permission to pursue their presence in our lives and ask for them - how good is that?! T**he greater gifts are wisdom, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, discerning spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues.**

2. He tells us that we can **'excel'** in the gifts, particularly those that build up the church. Moving in the gifts is a natural way of living as a child of God. Just as we can practise and improve a natural gifting, we can practise and get better at any gift the Holy Spirit gives us.

3. As well as asking for any gifts, we can expect any gift at any time and just when we need it. **'All these (the gifts) are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one just as he determines'**

4. **Any moving in any gifts at any time must be rooted in love (chapter 13),** especially towards one another. The gifts are given to bless the church and to build up one another. 'But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.'

Take another look at the list...

- **What gifts are we growing in already, which ones can we eagerly desire and why?**
- **Are there any we need right now for kingdom living?** Work, family, church life, friendships, difficult circumstances, life in general. Everything is available for us to bring something of heaven on earth. Sometimes we might get just what we need at just the right time, sometimes we need to ask!
- **Have we experienced any of these already?**
- **Are there any we know we have received as 'a one off', took us by surprise or turned up just when we needed it?**

Application & Response

Our experience should be - considering all we have thought about....

- That we are eager to receive more of Holy Spirit, want to be baptised and fully immersed, full of the Holy Spirit.
- We are encouraged to ask for the gifts and expect them.
- We can choose what we would like to receive and ask for it ourselves.
- With prophecy, we can begin with verbal praise and worship then ask Holy Spirit to begin to inspire us with spiritual insight.

- With tongues, initially to mimic a spiritual language you hear with small words and sounds, then ask Holy Spirit to loosen your tongue and create your own language.
- There might be a particular gift we need just at this time (i.e. wisdom, hospitality, generosity). Refer to the list.

That we can allow Holy Spirit to lead us, he is gentle and as kind as a dove, as well being as powerful as wind and fire! There may be all sorts of things that go on but we can guarantee that it will be a personal encounter for us all.